

THE SONS OF GOD AND

THE SINS OF ADAM

A short treatise for the Sons of God on

Redemption

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Redemption

“Creation and the continual sustaining of a universe are great, but redemption is greater.” – So said a saint long ago. But would it not be easier to start again from scratch than to undo and remedy a colossal fall of the human race into sin, decay and death? That is human reasoning. God has a great plan and purpose for Man which at this time, in its fulness, is beyond our full comprehension. It is the principal theme running everywhere through the Scriptures and seen most obviously in certain places such as Psalm 8 and the book of Hebrews. The Redemption of Man is not an afterthought! Redemption is part of creation. Man’s true perfecting is through death and resurrection. That plan is realised through Christ Jesus our Creator and Redeemer and through Him in the ministry of God’s Sons.

Condemnation

I read an article recently that ninety percent of Christians in the church system never go anywhere much with God. Only God knows the hearts of course. But the article went on to infer that there was an underlying reason for this and it was in a word “condemnation”. God’s precious people still in church-land are in chains but many of us who have come out are as well not experiencing the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Our righteousness before God is something we so need to understand and fully appropriate if we are to grow in the Lord and know Him more. To grow up in Him is to grow up in liberty.

Now, the accuser will say “Well, of course you are righteous before God. But, of course, if you sin, you’re not righteous. Because you can’t sin and be righteous.” And if you believe that, he’s got you and you’re in misery. This one thing we must know: That accuser cannot destroy our righteousness, for he cannot destroy the work of the Cross which destroyed him. What he robs us of is righteousness consciousness.

We have known what it is to be in this misery. So many believers still are in this misery. You can see it all over their faces. They have not yet come to that place which Paul speaks of when he says:

For I through the law (self-effort, self-righteousness) am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. (Gals. 2.19).

The term ‘law’ as Paul used it is all creaturely effort. Grace is all God-effort.

In other words he is saying: I have exhausted self-effort, self-righteousness, self-resources as giving me any standing before God and in so doing I am become as a dead man in respect to those things. Those things avail me as much as they would avail a dead man. And through this death, amazingly, I become alive to God.

The apostle Paul has learnt this the hard way having had these truths wrought out in his life. That is why his writings on law, grace, faith, sin and righteousness are so full of life and impart life. He has seen two things: the absolute bankruptcy of his own righteousness and the absolute sufficiency and permanence of Christ's righteousness bestowed upon him.

Until this position is thoroughly reached by us as it was for Paul it is the case that our hearts are ever seeking, consciously or unconsciously, something, to establish just a little bit of our own righteousness, our own good standing before God. We haven't utterly let go to God and rested in faith that *all* our righteousness is the work of another Man. *All of it!!* O God, may we come to know that our righteousness is a fixed thing not based on what we do or don't do but on the finished work of the Lord Jesus.

It takes a long time for many of us to come to this position to know His righteousness *alone* is our righteousness, and thereby to still the voice of the accuser.

But it is, oh, so necessary to come to this place where we have settled it once and for all that no longer are we seeking to establish even a touch of our own righteousness, but equally have we entirely given up hope of ever doing so.

The psalmist, long before Paul's day, spoke the same thing. *"I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of your righteousness, of yours only."* (Ps 71.16).

"There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus" (Roms.8.1). Do you really believe this? I mean really believe it. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us confers to us Christ's consciousness. Maybe you say, 'Yes I know righteousness. I know God is not holding 'it' against me.' But that's not all there is to "no condemnation". If we have ongoing sin consciousness that is a form of condemnation.

But you say, 'there has to be judgment of sin'. There is. But there is no judgment of the New Man that you are. Judgment and condemnation does fall heavily on the Adam Man bringing more and more death to that old nature. And we feel it. "Death works in us", Paul says.

Paul proclaims in Philippians Ch 3 that his own righteousness is actually a hindrance to his appropriating the righteousness of God. As it was for Paul so it is for us. It is not enough that we simply say and believe that in Christ we have the righteousness of God, without repudiating through experience our own righteousness now and forever.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3.6). To see by experience and by the Spirit what we were from our first lineage is to see that we were worm-ridden from birth. May God show each one of us this, because to really see this is to turn one's back on self-righteousness. That old Adam nature which ruled you and me had not one good thing in it for God or, in an ultimate sense, for mankind or the creation. God is not patching that up, but giving us another birth and progressively bringing into death the life from the first birth. At the same time He is progressively revealing a new life and new nature within us which is growing and pushing out the old life and nature. And this, dear brothers and sisters, is simply what it's all about.

A careful reading of Philippians 3 will show that all future spiritual growth in Christ even to attaining to the 'out resurrection' from the dead is contingent on our appropriating fully Christ's righteousness, and the precursor to that is the abandonment utterly of any self-righteousness.

"...that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness... but that which is ...the righteousness of God by faith" (Phil.3.8,9).

The apostle is saying that two righteousnesses cannot live together. If I'm to be found in Him, I must first be found naked insofar as my own righteousness is concerned. Then only can I put on the robe of righteousness that He gives. Then, Christ's righteousness shines in glory to me and is all mine in Him and satisfying to God.

The Lord Jesus has achieved for you and for me a complete salvation.

O dear ones, there is rest here.

Grief

And when we come to this place where condemnation is disempowered, we may find that although we are secure in our righteousness, nevertheless we have grief about an ongoing sinful habit that we think should long ago have been overcome, or should long ago have been taken out by the Lord. We may still sin as the old life struggles to live while the process of transformation, of death unto life, takes place.

This process is a movement upwards but it is not necessarily a straight line upwards. There are ups and downs. We remember that at the beginning of this walk, the Lord did deliver us from different sins, vices and bad habits, some truly awful things. He alone is good and did us good.

But there seems to remain this thing – and it is often this one thing – and it demoralises us because it's still there.

It may not be so much a question of righteousness any longer; it's rather a question of grief – grief that the thing is there.

That problem

Oh, have you ever said (perhaps countless times) 'If I could just be free of *that* problem! If only *that* problem could be fixed, then I'd be fine; then I could *really* serve God'. And time and prayers go on and it isn't fixed. And the Lord promises to deliver you, and still you're not delivered, and you cry, O God, why?

And you say, 'Oh, how many times? Why the delay in fixing this wretched thing, this abomination?' Courage!! The Lord has a deliverance for you that is more fully comprehensive than just deliverance from that one 'terrible' thing.

When sin still occurs, that gives us grief. Thank God for this! It means that evil is anathema to us because the HOLY Spirit dwells within. But because we have become so sensitive to sin, our grief can become overwhelming; it becomes too intimate because we wrongly identify with the old creation man, who we used to be, whose way of life was sin. Here, the flesh unjustly charges the spirit as an evil-doer, and the spirit grieves. This can be a time of many confusions and miseries.

Our release from inordinate grief comes when we in truth cease looking at ourselves after the flesh. As we sought God to show us our flesh nature, we must seek Him for an unveiling, a revelation, of the new creation man that we are – an identifying with who we *really* are.

The new creation man, who we are in positional terms and who we are becoming in dynamic terms, has never sinned and never will sin.

The apostle John says this plainly in his first epistle where he is speaking not about separate persons but of one person in whom are yet two separate and diametrically opposed natures.

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

In this the children (sons) of God are manifest, and the children (sons) of the devil. (1Jn 3.8-10).

This is the battle of the Seeds.

So when you hear of wars and rumours of wars, dear ones, and earthquakes, and nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom (Matt 24), know that it's not out there primarily, it's inside you!

We have here considered the question of inordinate grief and its resolution through a true identifying with the new creation that we are. This is all very true, but spiritual sight is needed to grasp it and hold it. Indeed a revelation!

And we still need to see the deliverance from 'that thing' itself. I hope we will see this as we go on. But first we need look at the matter of goodness.

Natural goodness

Have you ever met a person whom you could sense was a natural very good person? I think I have met only one and I've heard second hand of another one.

When I was in the company of the one I knew, a friend of mine, when I was in the world, there was a noticeable distinct aura of goodness about him. Other people said so too. You could sense this 'goodness'. Now my friend was an atheist. But you could trust him with your finances; or to babysit your children. The Roman poet, Virgil, was known for having this goodness.

This should not surprise us. Often we meet people in the world who are more good mannered and generally nicer than some of the Christians we know. How this phenomenon comes about is made clear by CS Lewis in "Mere Christianity" in the chapter headed *Nice People or New Men* – for those who have been puzzled why some Christians present such a bad testimony in their behaviour.

There is a goodness which is not the goodness of God, but is the goodness that comes from the knowledge of good and evil. This is a natural creaturely good that has definite limits. It can do temporal good, but its root is self.

Some people are born with a large slice of this goodness. Humans are not good, nor are they evil; they are a mixture of good and evil – both centred in SELF. And some sons of Adam get dealt a very big portion of the good side of the mix and others get dealt a big portion of the evil side. The "good" of man is the good of the creature not the good of the Creator.

For those of us who feel we've been dealt a bad hand of cards, take heart! Consider your calling brethren "*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen....that no flesh should glory in his presence*" (1Cor.27-29). God's calling is a great mystery. But rejoice! God has called you as firstfruits.

Made to measure

An earthly principle is made for an earthly world, just as the Law was given not for a righteous man but for an unrighteous man. In a temporal world these have temporal purpose. So too, natural goodness is valuable. In no way should we down rate it. All goodness and kindness is to be celebrated.

But when we move into the kingdom of God we move into a whole new realm where goodness has to be redefined entirely. The Lord Jesus Himself, when addressed as 'good' did not accept the honorific but said: *Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God.* (Matt 19.17). The rich young ruler in this exchange was likely referring to natural goodness, but the Lord was referring to the only enduring, self-sacrificing goodness, and the Source of goodness – God His Father. And we can say without pride that we are good, we are holy, precisely because goodness, holiness dwells within us and for no other reason; which is to say that the Spirit of the living God dwells within us. We have no goodness or holiness of our selves. Not a scintilla. Nor do the angels in heaven. Nor any creature. But He being in us makes us good. And salvation is simply this: the Spirit of God in man. Your salvation is the Spirit of God in you.

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so is the goodness of God higher than the goodness of the realm of good and evil. This higher, most high goodness is what we seek, and is God Himself. It comes from Life. The lesser goodness is derived from knowledge and is a knowledge-guide as to what man ought to do. Like the ten commandments written in stone, there is no life in it. The greater is the goodness that comes from Love and is full of Life. The one concerns the outer man; the other the inner man. The one is behavioural; the other intrinsic. The one is about choosing; the other is about abiding in Life.

The full deliverance

The fallen knowledge of good and evil is within every person. To be saved means to be saved from the entire lineage of Adam and from that entire fallen knowledge.

God will deliver us from our evil, but as well, He will deliver us from our good. For the good as well as the evil is corrupt. God would deliver us from this whole accursed (for it is accursed!) knowledge of good and evil, and translate us into Life.

You may wonder why one would want to get rid of the goodness that is in my friend before mentioned. Well, as long as this one is in the world and as long as the world remains, you wouldn't want to get rid of it.

But in the kingdom, to choose the good over the evil is tantamount to 'saving' old Adam. That is what the world does for Adam. God has no plan to save him. And we will see as we go on, that in the kingdom, apart from other considerations, choosing the good over the evil doesn't work.

God wants to deliver us not just from evil, but from the whole fallen principle. To take us right out of it. Salvation is not about doing good things and not doing bad things, it is about being restored to God. And that's it! God is separating to Himself a people, and He is separating out from this people any reliance upon any knowledge of this world. We think that good and evil must always be, must always have been, but NO. In an unfallen world there is no such thing.

The deliverance the LORD has for us will swallow up mere deliverance from that particular thing that you hate. That thing has only been allowed to continue because it is the very thing that will drive you to God to depend on Him to receive from Him more than just deliverance from that thing, but from your whole miserable condition brought about because you, though a Son, yet live in a fallen principle.

The Holy Spirit does indeed eliminate problems from our soul. But His work goes much further than that. This is not just about eliminating a problem, for that can be in a sense to fix Adam, but rather this is all about removing Adam and the fallen flesh knowledge.

But our habitual tendency in times of pressing temptation, is to seek to choose the good over the evil, which means to remain enmeshed in the swirling interplay of good and evil, separated from God and so long as we remain there we remain in death.

It was in choosing to go the way of the tree of knowledge that brought us into this bungle (from the human standpoint). It won't be by continuing in the same process that we get out. For this process is self-will and self defeating.

If we were instantly delivered from all the various lusts which we have inherited or cultivated while in old Adam, the core of the infection would remain untouched. For the root of sin is self-will and God will bring the axe to the root of the tree, as spoke John the Baptist:

And now the axe is laid unto the root of the trees. (Luke 3.9).

Once the tree of self-will is hewn down at the root, all its branches will shrivel and die.

Temptation

The sin of Adam was not in choosing evil, it was in choosing independence to know and decide himself what was good and what was evil; to look for good outside of God. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the means by which he could do that. And God provided that means, that choice, and commanded him not to take that up, because God was in effect saying 'You can't have that and Me; you can't not trust Me and have Me; if you choose that you'll lose Me and if you lose Me you will surely die.'

The choice God put before Man was between the tree of life and the tree of death, not between good and evil as we will see as we go on.

If you think about it, a lot of our struggles in temptation are almost independent of God! We try desperately to take up the good and deny the evil; or we implore God to help us – to take up the good and deny the evil.

He may do that in the early stages of our walk, as a mother cares for her babes, but this isn't ultimately what He's about in the making of Sons. He has much more for us than this.

Please consider this: There is a will of the flesh to indulge the flesh and that same will of the flesh can involve itself in denying the flesh. Whether indulging or denying, therefore, it is still the will of the flesh that lives. If we will die to self-will in any expression and submit ourselves, our will, to God we transcend the inducement of that old tree; God becomes involved and sin is overcome in the power of God. We have in fact chosen Life. There is no other way of overcoming evil but by getting God's involvement. The secret is to know the way. And God is revealing His ways to His Sons in this hour. *Show me Thy ways O Lord, teach me Thy paths.*

So then, what to do now in practical terms when the heat is on! A trial or temptation before us can be paralysing even anaesthetising, and you know that choosing and willing will not avail.

The answer then, the appointed way and the only way where light dwells, is by grace to die to self-will entirely. This dying to self-will does not mean dying only to the evil desire that presents itself in the temptation, for that in effect amounts to choosing the good. "Not my will (in any direction) but thine be done". Dying to self-will means dying to any will one way or the other.

Hear the Word of the Lord: *It's not whether you want it or not, it's whether the Lord is the LORD.*

There is a kind of existential fear that can come upon us. We may fear that if we give up our will, we will be use-less, will-less creatures, but it is not so. As the fallen will of flesh goes into death another will, unfallen, from God, becomes our will and this will is in the power of God. It is this will which is the basis of mighty faith.

If you would have an unfallen will – a will that works, O saint, then you must die to self-will.

The traditional stereotype of the overcomer is of one with steely jaw and iron will standing against temptation, beads of sweat glistening on the brow, shouting NO, who in the end prevails by sheer doggedness in outlasting the devil. This is a worldly, religious concept that elevates self. The overcomer in truth is one who has died to any hope coming from self, who has therefore given up his self-will to God and through God obtained the victory. You, as that overcomer will throw your crown down at the feet of Him who is the Overcomer in you.

Now you may surely say: Doesn't the scripture tell us to resist the devil and he will flee? Doesn't that involve effort?

It does involve effort, but not in your own strength! Your natural effort will never prevail. The scripture (James 4.7) does indeed tell us to resist the devil, but we should never read that second half of one verse in isolation, for before that in the same verse it tells us to submit to God. Let us look at that verse in larger context:

James Ch.4

vs6. *But He gives greater grace. Because of this it says "God resists proud ones, but He gives grace to humble ones."*

vs7. ***Therefore, submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.***

vs8. *Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*

Read these verses many times; meditate deeply on them. Allow the Holy Spirit to open this Word to you.

Grace is given to submitted, humble ones who give over to God. The devil is in no way going to flee from you except you be submitted to God.

We must give up the battle and give over to God in submission to Him if we are to prevail, like Jacob of old who had power over the angel because he lost, and in losing he won and was elevated from 'supplanter' to "Prince of God" having power with God and with men. (Gen.32.28). The arm of the Lord (the power of God) is laid bare on the behalf of those, who like their Master, have a lamb nature. The lamb and only the lamb turns into a lion. Here is the secret of the power of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is the lamb, not the lion, who unleashes the power of God.

The Lord Jesus is the lion of the tribe so long as He's the Lamb of God. If at any time He ceased to be the lamb, He would cease to be the lion. He is the lamb slain not at the foundation of the world, but *from* the foundation of the world. He is ever the lamb and the lion, and only the lion because He is the lamb. And as He is so are the Sons in this world. Can we understand what Paul means when he says: When I am weak then am I strong?

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2Cor 4.7).

Where the arm of the flesh is seeking to do anything, even overcome sin, God will stand back. The last thing we want in our moment of crisis is for God to stand back. The Lord is ready to move and deliver and give victory if only we will get out of the way.

The thing of utmost importance to us in our hour of trial/temptation is God's intervention. Yet the Lord doesn't always intervene in the way we might think He should. He doesn't follow a standardised pattern, and we cannot put Him in a box. This brings us to our next consideration.

Sanctification

Only the Lord knows our heart and everything in it. Our problem is we often see things all from our own point of view. And that point of view often comes from religion, tradition, upbringing, culture. God is sanctifying you, purifying you. He will do that in whatever way He wants. Let Him do what He wants.

Depending on what the Lord sees in your heart and your degree of abiding in Him, He may either deliver you out of the temptation, or let the sin be expressed for judgment unto healing unto righteousness. Either way, it's a movement toward godliness and greater abiding. If there is sin hidden in the soul it must come out and be dealt with, one way or the other.

This is healing. This is not condemnation. But as we go on I trust we will see that the Lord is not limited in the way He sanctifies each one of us.

We come from a fallen world and so much of the kingdom of God and God's ways are new to us and different. And not just a little different. Radically different! Goodness is radically different. The concepts of strength and weakness are opposite to the world's concepts. God's method of dealing with the dirt in your soul is radically different from anything you'll ever hear in church-land.

They could never even imagine how the Lord God goes about cleaning up a soul.

What He does is unthinkable to them and sometimes *initially* even to us as we go on deeper and deeper with Him. **But we do come to know His ways.**

We discover the hidden wisdom and method of God which He foreordained to our glory before the world began.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isa 55.8,9).

Until we began this deeper walk, we never dreamed just how true are those words. Only experience tells us.

And this intimate sanctifying experience brings us into intimacy with the Lord. The Lord is never closer to us than when He is dealing with the dirt, though we hardly think this at the time.

How precious also unto me are thy thoughts, O God! (Ps.139.17). This is intimacy. This is the heavenly treasure Jesus spoke of: *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* What is more to be treasured than to have the Mighty God, the Creator of the ends of the earth who is from everlasting to everlasting share His thoughts with us? How much we seek to know His merciful thoughts toward us in our time of need!

What happens next in your hour of temptation will expose your heart and its deepest desires and your present degree of abidingness. If you fall there is no condemnation; your righteousness remains intact in Christ.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD...Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down (Ps 37. 23,24). Note that all of the steps are ordered. Even falling down the steps.

As to your grieving, let it become repentance rather than regret; use it to draw near to God. Be soft in God; soft toward God; thank Him for the Blood that cleanses from all sin and that the unstoppable process of sanctification and transformation goes on.

"For by one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the ones being sanctified" (Heb. 10.14, literal Gk).

And know this, that even if you feel ashamed, He is not ashamed of you.

"Both He sanctifying and the ones being sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers" (Heb. 2.11, literal Gk).

God sees the end from the beginning. Our sanctification goes on **from** perfection not unto it. We have to get to where we are.

Abiding

Sin is separation from God. That is what sin is in its essence.

If the essence of sin is separation from God, then connection with God is the elimination of sin. Our focus then must turn from engaging in choice-making, of willing the good/denying the evil – *actually an exercise in self-will* – to our connection with God, to abiding more and more in Him and resting in who we really are in Him.

The apostle John says in 1Jn 3.6: *Whosoever abides in him sinneth not*. Please, please look at that! Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Here (not in choosing and willing) is our deliverance. He continues in the same verse: *Whosoever sinneth has not seen him neither known him*.

Sin occurs only because we don't see (know) Him – in the trial – our abiding is not yet complete; not yet fixed. To be not yet fixed in abidingness means to be not yet fully an overcomer.

Can we see what it is that determines whether we sin or not? It is only our abidingness in Him. Or, to put it another way, it is the extent to which we have grown up into Christ and He into us.

Can we see what makes an overcomer? It is not our wise choosing nor our iron willed resolution. It is this: *"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: [Why] because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world"* (1 John 4.4).

Our present temporary, often troublous state is that we are in a transformative/transitionary process from one species of being to another species of being. As we become more into Christ, sin will become less and less.

The creature in the cocoon that is half way between a caterpillar and a butterfly will still exhibit some features and deeds of the grub, and these becoming less and less, and the butterfly becoming more and more as the change continues. The grub ever minds the things of the dirt; the butterfly the things of the heavens.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (Romans. 8.5).

And the process is uni-directional and unstoppable. Never do butterflies turn into grubs. But they must remain (abide) in the cocoon for the metamorphosis to be complete. Even so must we abide in Him. The cross, the death, the resurrection, the abiding life are God's one-way passage to the new creation, or Man in the image of God.

Choosing

The biggest deliverance of all, far greater than deliverance from any one of our still remaining sinful habits, is deliverance from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That is to say from choosing. And the greatest peril leading to the greatest bondage lies in choosing. If we are choosing we are relying on self.

Getting us to choose is still the enemy's aim just as it was way back in the garden. The serpent's tactic was firstly to get Eve to question God's integrity and then having raised doubts about this in Eve's mind, to get her into relying on self in making choices separate from God as to what was best, or what was good and what was evil.

Choosing, itself is a fallen state because it is not of faith. To be involved in choosing is to be in the flesh, as choosing is self-will. It is to be cut off from God's resources. Eve was already well fallen when she parleyed with the serpent and went into choosing mode.

Then was the tree attractive. That tree was the Tree of Death and only appeared attractive to one who was not in the Light. Seen in Light and Truth it is an awful tree, never to be desired, not pleasant to the eyes, and not having any pleasant fruits. But to deceived Eve it appeared as the tree of life.

And **when the woman saw** that the tree was good....she took of the fruit and did eat. (Gen 3.6). It wasn't good!! In darkness everything is reversed.

A few years ago the Spirit of God spoke this Word directly to me: *The awfulness of sin is covered over by glamour.* The scripture says that God cannot be tempted with evil. This is because God sees evil as it is. He is Light and He cannot be deceived. Sin has no appeal if seen in Light.

For sin to have an appeal, there has got to be bewitchment, and that is exactly what the word 'glamour' means. Sin must appear to be something other than what it is. The bewitched tree appeared good to Eve in every way as a welcoming, enticing doorway behind which lay every treasure she desired. But it appeared this way only because she was separated from God in her consciousness and, seeking separate guidance outside of God, she was cut off from God's resources. Darkness had blinded her eyes.

To Eve, because of her mistrust, her doubts, she was clouded over by and entered into darkness, and the Tree of Life, had she approached it, would have appeared to her as unreliable, undesirable, in fact as the tree of death.

Without God's eyes, His light, we are all blind and groping in the dark and seeing things other than how they are. Eventually, good becomes evil and evil becomes good. (Western society has arrived at that level of darkness. What was once obvious evil is now called good, and the good, evil.)

If we are battling still with sinful habits or 'that problem' it is because in our soul there is something of darkness that yet remains there unhealed and registers itself still as a predisposition to a particular sin. Once we succumb to the *temptation to choose* the good over 'that thing', we enter into self-will and the flesh. Then being in the flesh we will go the way our flesh is predisposed to go. It is the greatest trap!

The carnal realm is the place of glamour, bewitchment, enchantment, lies, delusion, evil desires, dark magic, sin and death. As soon as we enter into willing the good and resisting the evil we enter into the carnal realm and darkness, and being there, and being *in the moment*, the evil we are predisposed to do because of habitual past indulgence, or because of iniquity passed down through the family line, will appear

more attractive, desirable and compelling than the good. We will invariably choose the evil. The enemy wants to get you into choosing mode because once there you then being in the flesh will choose evil.

“Those that are in the flesh do mind the things of the (THEIR) flesh” (Roms 8.5).

The carnal mind is no neutral energy, but is a phenomenon risen up in a fallen world that is ever opposed to God. It is the mind of this world. We speak to this mind when we speak to others (except those who are spiritual). There may be many expressions of this but the one working principle. All of it can be gathered up into the spirit of anti-christ. This is what you are up against whenever you speak to people and this applies to believers and unbelievers. We begin to understand what lies behind the hostility toward God that we see in people. It is a fierce, cunning serpentine mind implacably opposed to God. Truths about God and spiritual things are rejected regardless of evidence. Like Leviathan (Job 41) its scales are strong and set close together so nothing can get through. It is king over all the children of pride. (Job 41.34)

The Trap

The old problem of Romans seven re-emerges upon entry into temptation as soon as we become caught in choosing the good over the evil.

Vs15: I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

Vs18: For I have a desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Vs19: For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. (NIV).

O wretched creature that I am, I've been caught in the trap again! Seeing this is seeing into the operation of the law of sin and death. Seeing the operation of darkness is the first step in having power over that darkness. And there is a way out. There is a greater law than this....We will see this presently.

The psychology of the world and the methods of virtually all of church-land aim to predispose the flesh to the good and away from the evil. This is the way of religion: to adjust the flesh. Is it any wonder, therefore, that the cited figure of 90% of Christians being incapacitated spiritually by condemnation is most likely true? If that figure is anywhere near true, then obviously the methods used are not working, nor in any way pleasing to God, nor bringing any believer closer to God.

They that are in the flesh cannot please God. (Roms. 8.8).

How much effort is put in through religious or secular means in fixing up the flesh! Church methods are full of this! In the kingdom, having 'good' flesh avails nothing.

God's processings and dealings in the soul go a lot deeper, as those who have experienced them can testify. God is eliminating the flesh and installing the spirit.

The tree – the very symbol of temptation! It beckons you to come and partake of its fruit by entering into choosing, holding out the promise of attaining virtue thereby. 'Come on in', it says. 'What could be better', it says, 'than to choose good and reject evil?' It is hard to argue against this, unless with spiritual eyes we see what the stakes really are, and what is actually happening. Almost every story through every media down the ages concerns in some way the battle of good vs evil, and the triumph of the good.

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness (1Jn 5.19).

The whole world including institutionalised christianity has swallowed the lie that choosing good ensures receiving good, and that good = God. Nothing could be further from the truth on both counts.

Now the mind of the flesh [which is sense and reason without the Holy Spirit] is death – death that comprises all the miseries arising from sin....So then those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Roms. 8.6,8 Amplified).

The Spirit says: *The carnal mind masquerades as a truth seeker, but is ever manoeuvring to take up an anti-God position.*

The tree puts before you the tantalising prospect of having knowledge of good and evil. It bids you move away from God and examine things for yourself; just have a taste. Then having got you out of the Spirit and into the flesh relying on self-effort, you seek to choose the good. It need do no more. You are in the flesh, in that carnal, fallen realm, which was the real aim of the temptation. You are done!

To your now energised flesh, the evil is more attractive, more compelling because of your re-animated predisposition to that particular sin. Sin enters fully and brings forth death. This is the operation of the law of sin and death.

Choosing between good and evil is where we *enter into* temptation. God was in effect saying way back in the garden and to us today: Don't enter in to temptation. If you choose Life you will be escaping entering into temptation. And the Lord Jesus repeats this in the Lord's Prayer: *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* He doesn't say: Lead us not into sin, but – lead us not into temptation.

And again, in that moment when He sweat blood He said: *Pray that ye enter not into temptation.* (Luke 22.40), and He repeated *Why sleep ye? Rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.* (Luke 22.46). The trap clearly is entering in. *Remove thy way far from her (the temptress), and come not nigh the door of her house.* (Proverbs 5.8).

To be or not to be? For Eve, "To eat or not to eat" – that was the question. But the peril was being "in the question" at all. At that stage it was a foregone conclusion. The Lord Jesus said "*Pray that you enter not into temptation*". Do not enter in; pray that you do not enter in. *Early will I seek Thee.* That doesn't mean crack of dawn, but early in potential peril will I seek Thee. At the first sense of choosing the good/denying the evil, I stop and choose neither and I choose Him, which is to choose the tree of Life. And the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus becomes operational and transcends the law of sin and death. Or, to put it another way, God intervenes on our behalf.

One of the deceptions that religion has taught us is that God tests us to see if we will choose good or evil.

God does not put before us good and evil that we should choose. That would be to tempt us, and God tempts no one. *God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man.* (Jas.1.13).

He puts before us His way – which is Life OR our way – which is death. Life and death here, notwithstanding their ultimate meanings, often speak of quality of life.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil could in effect be called the tree of SELF, or the way of going-your-own-way.

To the children of Israel God said: *See, I have set before thee life and good, and death and evil* (Deut. 30.15).

Note, it wasn't good and evil – that is not what He puts before us, neither is it a choice we should make – it was between {LIFE/AND/GOOD} — and — {DEATH/AND/EVIL}. Life first making good; and death first making evil. Good does not exist until there first be LIFE and evil does not exist before there first be DEATH, for death simply is anything, any being, any place or state outside of God. God never puts before us good and evil and says: *choose!* That is rather the serpent's gambit. God in effect says: *Trust Me, choose Life and live, and you will get the good.* The LORD continues a few verses further saying with almost emphatic pleading:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that you may live (Deut. 30.19). Again, and always, the choice is between life and death.

A Hard Lesson

Very often we eat of that accursed tree and enter into the carnal realm unknowingly, unwittingly, with good intention. We are wanting the good. But herein lies the very crux of the matter – It is not that we are seeking good, it is that we are seeking good that is outside of God.

Since the Garden of Eden we as a race have been learning and are yet to learn that there is no such thing. It is bitter learning.

C.S. Lewis expresses it precisely:

“God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on petrol {gasoline}, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way...”

God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there.”
— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

And, oh, the pain that it has cost God and His Son and us to know this! And to know it forever and ever in the great purposes of God. But the suffering, though great now, will be swallowed up in glory when ultimately the whole human race through the true Church will come to know and will come to show to principalities and powers, in the ages to come the exceeding riches of God's grace in His love and kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2.7).

But if we partake of poison with good or bad intention, it is still poison, and our intention makes it not one whit less deadly. Let us seek *primarily* a *primary* thing and let us stop seeking *primarily* a *secondary* thing. From Life comes good (not vice versa). If we would have the good, let us grab hold of Life. The lie of that tree and subtly, oh so subtly, inferred by the serpent is that there is good, as good as or better than God's good, outside God.

Good that doesn't come from Life will turn out to be no good! There is no real good to be found anywhere but in Life and from Life. We are all learning this in this life.

So, have we and the entire human race had enough of sin and its attendant bondage to know that its end is misery and destruction? To know that there is ultimately nothing good in it, but rather misery, pain and hopelessness. Are we, His children, still struggling to get free of its tentacles and finding that our methods are often in vain? This is what we and the entire world are finding out – the hard way! Often we hear people in the world make statements such as: What are we doing here? What's the purpose of it all? Why all the suffering? Why is there so much evil in the world? These questions are swallowed up by the question: What is Man? and by the answer to that question:-

What is Man

To understand who and what Man is, is to transcend all those common questions. Man is the visible expression of the invisible God. Without God, Man is incomplete because God and Man are one. The most important thing to Man is God and the most important thing to God is Man. God loves Man. The great plan of God in creation involves redemption, for redemption is part of creation. In the fall, man, through the experience of going his own way, like the prodigal, is to learn from experience all about that way and come back to God not in holy innocence and naivety as when he left Father's house, but in having known death and life and good and evil in himself and having the knowledge of God through experience, to come to a state of mature and enlightened perfection fully fitted for God's purposes in the ages to come.

All things work together for ultimate good because God is in control. The fall was factored in along with its remedy through Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection to be the appointed way for man's perfecting. The price that the Father has paid (Love suffers most), the price that the Lord Jesus has paid and the price man has paid ensure for all beings and for all time that never again can sin enter into the world. To comprehend how this can be, we need to go back to a time of innocence.

THAT MARVELLOUS PLAN

"But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 7,8).

When all was in unfallenness, before ever had entered into the world any evil, there was the potential for an alternative to God's will. God being what He is: perfect Love and self-givingness to all His creatures, His will being only their greatest good and highest happiness, an alternative to that becomes a sin against the creation, a sin against love and a sin against God. In a word, Evil. In unfallenness all was perfect but the perfection was a state of innocence and precariousness because there was always the potential that the perfection could be marred by creaturely self interest at the expense of the greater whole creation. This potential was always THERE. Always hanging over the creation. God knew the outcome if the potential ever became an actuality – that evil would come in but would not ultimately prevail, because Love is greater than all. But the creation didn't know it as God knew it. Therefore the possibility of a departure from the light and a move into selfish dissent would always hang there – unless the potential could be gotten rid of.

So long as the creation in its naivety continued on in this indefinite indetermination, sure progress and expansion was in suspense. That is no basis on which to build an everlasting kingdom. So God got rid of the potential – by pre-ordaining the fall. When the outworking of this evil age is complete, there is an end forever of evil, but also an end to the potential for evil. When a potential becomes an actuality there no longer exists the potential. The creation then goes on forever, and evil having been seen for what it is to its end, becomes demonstrably forever an impossibility in terms of a potential and an actuality in the eyes of an intelligent creation who have seen and suffered its outworking. The creation is no longer naïve.

The alternative to love had to be made manifest, had to firstly be shown to be evil, to be a sin against all, and an offence against divine harmony and had to be drawn out to its ultimate to unequivocally reveal its true nature, that the intelligent and restored creation would recoil in horror and forever renounce such an alternative to *its own perfection*; would forever recoil from such a demonstrated error and utter failure. Oh, Glory! What a future yet awaits the creation! Perfect Love and harmony and God All and in all – and nothing to threaten the continuance. His kingdom shall have no end.

Truly, through this terrible darkness in which we now live, the best is yet to come. But what a price has been paid! By God. It has cost Him everything. He delivered up His most precious only begotten Son for us all, And God Himself being Love suffered most because to love is to suffer, and to love most is to suffer most. And the creation: how much we have all suffered! The whole creation groans in travail at this time (but, thank God, has been subjected in hope). (Romans 8).

This present world is a world of suffering and evil, of evil men and evil spirits, of hurt and injustice and misery. But, praise God, this world is only temporary nevertheless necessary and God will restore and judge all.

The death and resurrection of Christ has indelibly imprinted on all the universe the love of God toward Man and the wisdom of God's way, while at the same time demonstrating the horror of every false way. The Lord God is working out His plan in this present sin ridden world.

It is a plan for the establishment of a kingdom the increase of which shall never end, and involves the elimination of every vestige of sin and evil from the very fabric of existence and the removal forever of the *potential* for evil.. Without this latter the former could never be secure. (See Isaiah 9.6,7).

But now –

The tree that restrains the world

What does a fallen knowledge in this age mean to the world? God loves the world; all that great mass that don't even know Him or even want Him. *His tender mercies are over all His works* (Ps 145.9).

There is a knowledge given into man in the Fall which operates as an internal check so that unregenerate man in his independence and alienation from God, may have a curb on his behaviour for his individual and collective self preservation. The world, so long as it is the world, needs this restraint; otherwise it would quickly destroy itself. We are speaking here of the knowledge of good and evil internalised into the conscience. Even with this, the history of mankind is one of blood, of never ending wars and disputes and violations, of cruelty of every kind.

Imagine a world where human beings in a fallen state had no conscience at all!!

This sense, therefore, of good and evil which is within every person fulfils, at this time, in the fallen world system, a necessary function.

So it is that God always meets man where he's at! The Lord Jesus when in the flesh had compassion on Adam's descendants and healed their pains with all of the healing miracles that He did. And God still heals today (I can attest to this), but the *emphasis* is not so much at this time on physical healing.

Now that He dwells in man, God is moving with emphasis on ultimate healing, on wholeness, and He is beginning with the healing of the Sons of God, who in turn will bring healing in the name of the LORD to the world.

The sanctifying, purifying work of the Holy Spirit is, at this time, centred on the Sons. For now, the world and all creation groans and travails in pain waiting for the manifestation of the Sons of God (Roms 8) because that manifestation will herald the world's deliverance out of corruption and into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. An awesome soon coming ministry awaits the Sons.

The tree that heals the world

In the New Creation as seen by the apostle John in Revelation, there is no tree of knowledge, but there is the Tree of Life, and herein lies the real, the true healing of the world:

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22.2).

Herein opens up the ministry of the Sons of God in the coming age, but that is not the scope of this study, and besides, must await light from the Lord, should He choose at this time to give it.

This present world operates under the knowledge of good and evil. This realm of fallen knowledge now in this fallen world will never heal the world because the essence of its nature is to alienate man from God. It is the knowledge of God from the tree of life which will heal the world. Restoration to God is the only healing and wholeness that man needs because alienation is the only problem he has.

Now, if the fruit of the tree of knowledge will never heal the world, how much more will it never heal those who are no longer of the world? It is not food for Sons of God. Yet we continue to eat of it when we choose the good over the evil.

Sons of God cannot live in a fallen principle. To do so is to cast off grace and come under law.

The Overcomers

To trust in God is simply to choose Life. We are coming to see that wherever Life is, that is where true goodness is. To find anything outside of God even in seeking good is to ultimately find sin and death.

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden eating thou shall eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, dying thou shalt die. (Genesis 2.16,17: KJV, margin).

Everything He said and commanded was to our good. It was mistrust that estranged us from Him; it is trust that brings us back home.

In Him was life and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it. (Jn.1.4). Darkness cannot see into the light. It sees the light shining but it doesn't know what it means.

Life walked among us and brought light into the world. Men did not understand that light and sought to stop it from revealing the true nature of their hearts. But they couldn't put out the light. So they killed the life that brought the light. But it wouldn't die. All that happened was that it came back a million-fold and shines now in your heart.

"To as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the Sons of God even to them that believe on His name."(Jn.1.12).

Believing on His name is choosing Life. Choose the Lord Jesus every day! We are no longer ignorant. We have learned from bitter experience, as we were meant to, that this is the only choosing we should do. And remember, Child of God, what He said:

"You did not choose me but I chose you"
Hallelujah!

Critical it is that the Sons of God know and walk in the way of overcoming for they are destined for rulership in the soon coming ages. The rewards are great and the price is high, but –

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he will be my son."
(Rev. 21.7).

This message is about overcoming. It is about abiding in Christ as the only way, yet the sure way and the guaranteed way to overcoming. It is about exchanging a fallen principle fitted for this present world, for the powers of the world to come. It is about spiritual growth, which means abiding and reaching forth to attain to that which is already won for us and making it real now. Perfection is abiding in Jesus Christ. He is God's perfect Man. Behold Him and be changed into His image! And in beholding Him, behold the royal road of Joseph – perfection through the divine indwelling.

But a cautionary word here. We are not seeking to abide for perfection's sake itself, but to achieve union. That is, we seek the perfection of perfect abiding.

The words of Oswald Chambers may help us here:

It is a trap to presume that God wants to make us perfect specimens of what He can do – God's purpose is to make us one with Himself. The emphasis of holiness movements tends to be that God is producing specimens of holiness to put in His museum.

Christian perfection is the perfection of a relationship with God that shows itself to be true even amid the seemingly unimportant aspects of human life. God's purpose is not to perfect me to make me a trophy in His showcase; He is getting me to the place where He can use me. Let Him do what He wants. (end quote)

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. (Jn 15.5).

Again, the Apostle John speaks and it seems fitting that he should be the one thus to speak about closeness to the Lord Jesus. He was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." He speaks of coming fully to that place of perfect abiding:

And now, little children, abide in him; that when he is revealed, we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, then ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him. (1Jn2. 28,29).

I haven't yet reached the place that John speaks about. The place of perfect abiding. The place of full overcoming. The place where condemnation, grief and shame no longer even come to mind. But I want to. And you do too. And so does the Spirit. So may the Holy Spirit continue His blessed work in us (we are so blessed!) and take us on to the returning of that perfect day "*When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy*" (Job 38.7).

Amen and amen.

John Joseph